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THE SANDMAN™

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the DOLL'S HOUSE part 2

GAIMAN • DRINGENBERG • JONES

HI! ARE YOU ROSE?

YEAH

BE RIGHT DOWN!

MOVING IN

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I'M HAL CARTER--YOUR NEW LANDLORD. COME ON IN.

LET ME GIVE YOU A HAND WITH YOUR BAGS.

YOU'RE UP ON THE SECOND FLOOR. THAT OKAY?

UHH.., SURE.

SORRY, I WAS MILES AWAY.

SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF *FLORIDA?* MUST BE A BIG CHANGE AFTER, WHERE WAS IT, NEW JERSEY?

YEAH, BUT I'VE ONLY BEEN BACK IN THE STATES A COUPLE OF HOURS.

I SPENT THE LAST WEEK IN ENGLAND WITH *MY MOM*, AND I HAVEN'T QUITE RECOVERED FROM *THAT* YET. ASK ME IN A WEEK.

EXCUSE ME, HAL...

... BUT WE WERE WONDERING...

... ARE YOU GOING TO BE DOLLY THIS EVENING?

BECAUSE IF YOU ARE...

...WE WON'T BRING KEN'S MOTHER BACK HERE...

... AFTER THE SHOW.

WE DON'T MIND OF COURSE...

...BUT MOM'S VERY STRAIGHT.

NOT LIKE US.

HAHA.

I *DON'T* THINK MISS DOLLY WILL BE *GRACING* US WITH HER PRESENCE TONIGHT, CHILDREN. KEN'S MOTHER CAN COME OVER WITH IMPUNITY.

NOW KEN, BARBARA, THIS IS ROSE. SHE'S *MOVING* IN UPSTAIRS.

CALL ME BARBIE, ROSE. BARBIE AND KEN, ISN'T THAT A *SCREAM?* HAHA

RIGHT. YEAH. WELL... *HI*, GUYS.

HELLO, NEW HOUSEMATE, WE HEARD THE *COMMOTION*, AND THOUGHT IT PROPER TO INTRODUCE OUR-SELVES.

I AM CHANTAL. THIS IS ZELDA.

ZELDA AND MYSELF HAVE LIVED HERE FOR TWO YEARS... WE POSSESS THE LARGEST COLLECTION OF STUFFED SPIDERS IN PRIVATE HANDS ON THE EASTERN SEABOARD.

OH. THAT'S NICE.

WELL, *NOW* YOU'VE MET JUST ABOUT *ALL* OF OUR HAPPY HOUSEHOLD.

EXCEPT *GILBERT*. HE'S ON THE TOP FLOOR.

HERE YOU GO. I'M *JUST* BELOW YOU, SO IN CASE OF *PROBLEMS*, OR AN UNEXPECTED *ATTACK* FROM THE *SPIDER WOMEN*, JUST BANG ON THE FLOOR.

THANKS.

THIS IS SORT OF *EXCITING*. I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE I'M *HERE*.

I HATE TO PRY, BUT... WHY *ARE* YOU HERE?

I'M IN YOUR HOUSE BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT THE ROOMMATE AGENCY FOUND ME AT NO NOTICE.

I'M IN FLORIDA TO FIND MY BROTHER. I'M PLAYING DETECTIVE FOR MY MOTHER AND GRAND-MOTHER...

YOUR BROTHER? WHAT'S HE LIKE?

I DON'T KNOW. HE'D BE ABOUT TWELVE, NOW. I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM FOR SEVEN YEARS.

HIS NAME IS JED.

IN THE LAND OF MARVELOUS DREAMS

HOLD MY HAND, JED. AND WE WILL FLY.

1
OH, OH, WE ARE FLYING.

2
I CANNOT FLY WHEN I AM AWAKE.

3
DO NOT LET GO OF MY HAND, JED, OR YOU WILL FALL.

4
HELLO, JED! WATCH OUT FOR THE SKOOKY BIRD!

HA HA! IT IS OUR SKOOKY BIRD.

5
OH NO, IT IS THE SPOOKY BIRD.

6
IT IS TICKLING MY HAND. HA—HA! OH DEAR!

7
MOTHER! SAVE ME! I AM FALLING TO THE GROUND! OH! OH!

8
SHUT UP, YOU LITTLE *BASTARD*, OR I'LL *REALLY* GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO *SCREAM* ABOUT!

JED BITES THE INSIDE OF HIS CHEEK TO KEEP FROM SOBBING ALOUD.

HE WHIMPERS, NERVOUSLY, DEEP IN HIS THROAT.

THE FLOOR IS UNCOMFORTABLE, AND HIS BLADDER ACHES.

JED EXTENDS AN ARM TO THE WALL, WALKS CAREFULLY THROUGH THE DARK TO THE CORNER OF THE BASEMENT.

HE URINATES IN THE CORNER.

THE SMELL THAT RISES FROM THE HOLE MAKES HIM GAG.

THEN HE CURLS UP ON THE DAMP DIRT FLOOR, UNDER HIS RAGGED BLANKET, AND, FOR A FEW MORE FLEETING HOURS...

...JED ESCAPES.

1

I FELL ON THE TOP OF BRUTE'S BALLOON!

2

NOW, JED, LYTA AND I WILL FLY DOWN TO MY DREAM DOME. AND THOSE SCAMPS BRUTE AND GLOB MUST GO BACK TO THEIR CELLS.

tap tak takatak tak tak

Dear Mom,

Hi -- well, I've been here a couple of days so far. Hope you and Grandma Unity are fine.

I'm staying in the house Unity's people found near Cape Canaveral. It's sort of weird here. I mean, I keep feeling like I've strayed into a remake of The Addams Family.

The house (and my room) is great, but the other tenants...

Okay, get this, Mom (and Grandmom). Downstairs are a couple called Ken and Barbie -- they're normal. Terrifyingly, appallingly normal -- like they've gone through normal and come out the other side. The Stepford Yuppies.

Right; the room across the hall contains the Spider Women, Zelda and Chantal. I don't know their last name.

Nobody seems to know if they're mother and daughter, sisters, lovers, business partners, or what. They dress in white and collect dead spiders. Chantal says they have over 24,000. Zelda never says anything.

tak tappa tap

I only hope that their spiders are all dead. If I find a spider in my bath, I'm not going to check its catalogue number before screaming discreetly and flushing it down the john.

Upstairs is Gilbert.

Gilbert, as far as I can tell, is a disembodied presence who haunts the attic room. I've heard his voice, booming down the stairwell. Never seen him, though.

(What he was saying was that he wanted Hal to bring him a six-foot-long pencil, since he was going to stay in bed for a week, and wished to draw on the ceiling.)

tak... tak

Weird, huh? And he sounds British to me, Unity. Fruit loops from the mother country.

At least Hal, our landlord, is normal.

BAM

HUH?

THAT *MAN!* THE *GALL* OF THAT *IF-HE'S-SO-CLEVER-WHAT-IS-HE-DOING-DIRECTING-A-DRAG-SHOW-NO-TALENT MAN!*

HE'S CUT MY TRIBUTE TO SONDHEIM, AND GIVEN AN EXTRA NUMBER TO THAT SLUT *MITZI!*

I TOLD HIM, DOUGLAS, I DON'T CARE *WHO* YOU'RE SCREWING...

BUT IF "*BROADWAY BABY*" GOES, THEN SO DO *I!*

THE CURE

BOYS DON'T CRY

ASSHOLE!

SLAM!

tap tak takatak tak tak

Well, relatively normal, anyway.

Oh -- another tenant showed up when I did. He -- or she -- is a big raven (I think), who's been hanging round outside my window. Hal says I ought to charge him rent on my window-ledge.

tika tika tip tak

Yesterday I went out to the lighthouse on Dolphin Island. I spent this morning in the courthouse, going through the county records. This is what I got:

LOCAL MAN DIES IN 2-CARSMASH-UP

LEAVES 8-YEAR OLD SON

BURT PAULSEN

When Dad died (and why couldn't anyone have let us know? I mean, I would have liked the option to refuse to go to his funeral) --

tak tak tik tap

Jed definitely went to live with our Grandfather -- my Father's father. Ezra Paulsen, lighthouse-keeper, on the island.

Grandfather (wish I'd met him; he sounds like a nice old guy. Looked like Santa Claus in oilskins in the photo) looked after Jed. But Grandpa drowned, about four years back.

He was 82. So where's Jed? Don't know. Yet.

taka tak tap

And that's all I've got so far.

I'll keep looking.

All my love to both of you.

Rose

KAARR

Hello, Matthew.

The surveillance goes well, I presume.

She's a vortex, Matthew. Sooner or later she'll attract the stray dreams to her--or she'll be drawn to them.

YEAH. IT GETS KINDA DULL, THOUGH, PEEKING IN THROUGH THE WINDOWS. AND I FEEL KINDA CREEPY, Y'KNOW, *WATCHING* HER LIKE THAT.

Just keep watching her. You are my eyes, Matthew.

UM. SOMETIMES I CAN FEEL YOU THERE IN THE BACK OF MY *HEAD.*

IT'S REALLY GOING TO TAKE ME A LONG TIME TO GET *USED* TO ALL THIS.

SO, UH, *WHAT* ARE YOU DOING DOWN HERE ON THE SHORE?

I am creating a new nightmare. I have not yet given it a name. Do you have anything new to report?

NOTHING YET. ROSE IS STILL TRYING TO FIND HER LITTLE BROTHER, BOSS.

I MEAN *SIRE.*

I doubt that anything connected with a vortex is coincidental, Matthew. I wish to know more about her brother. Get me a picture of the boy.

"I must see him to find him."

DOLLY LAMOUR in DRAG REVUE

I'D BEEN IN THE TOWN FIVE DAYS NOW. I'D FOUND OUT MORE ABOUT JED: HE WAS SENT TO LIVE WITH RELATIVES WHEN GRANDFATHER DIED. MY LATE-FATHER-THE-SKUNK'S SIDE OF THE FAMILY.

I'D BEEN TO SEE DOLLY'S SHOW. THAT WAS WHAT HAL CALLED HIMSELF, WHEN HE WAS HERSELF.

I THOUGHT I KNEW THE TOWN AND I DIDN'T.

FOR EXAMPLE, I THOUGHT THAT THE ALLEY WAS A SHORT-CUT BACK TO THE HOUSE.

OH...YOU BEAUTIFUL DOLL...YOU GREAT BIG BEAUTIFUL DOLL...

LET ME PUT MY ARMS AROUND YOU, I CAN NEVER LIVE WITHOUT YOU...

COCOA SMALL ENGINE REPAIR

NOPE. NOT AT MIDNIGHT IT ISN'T.

CLICK

HEY, KITTY KITTY. YOU OUT AFTER YOUR *BED* TIME.

HERE KITTY KITTY.

PRETTY KITTY. WANNA *PLAY* WITH US, KITTY KITTY?

HEE. HEE. HEE.

NOW, KITTY. MONEY FIRST, THEN WE DO THE THING.

SNICK

DON'T TOUCH. ME.

AHH. KITTY'S GOT A TEMPER

GENTLEMEN, IT WOULD SEEM TO ME THAT THE YOUNG LADY DESIRES TO RETAIN BOTH HER PURSE AND HONOR.

AW SHIT!

RUN!

YOU'LL EXCUSE ME IF I INTRUDE?

TRIP

WHAK!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO *KICK* THEM, MISS, ER...?

MMM, NO. NO THANK YOU. THESE ARE NICE SHOES.

THANK YOU. THANKS A WHOLE BUNCH. MY NAME'S *ROSE*. ROSE WALKER.

AHHH, THE DOWNSTAIRS FRONT LODGER.

THE *WHAT*?...SAY, YOU MUST BE *GILBERT*, THE WEIR- UH, THE *MAN* UPSTAIRS.

I'M AFRAID I MUST.

GILBERT. IS THAT YOUR FIRST NAME, OR YOUR LAST?

INDUBITABLY. I COULD NOT HAVE PUT IT BETTER MYSELF.

MISS WALKER, WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO ACCOMPANY YOU BACK TO THE HOUSE?

THANK YOU.

I WENT TO SEE DOLLY'S SHOW.

OUR ESTEEMED LAND-LORD'S THESPIAN ENDEAVOR? I MUST CONFESS I HAVE NOT HAD THE PLEASURE.

IT'S FUN, IN A CAMP SORT OF WAY. THEY ALL SING "*HELLO DOLLY*" WHEN HE FIRST COMES ON STAGE.

Y'KNOW, IT SEEMED LIKE MOST OF THOSE GUYS HAD BETTER LEGS THAN *I* DO...

THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM THE TOAD-DANCERS OF PLUTO, JED.

AW, G'WAN, LET US OUT.

WE WILL BE GOOD.

WHEN I HAVE MY BABY YOU WILL HAVE A NEW FRIEND TO PLAY WITH...

1

I WONDER WHAT DO THESE BUTTONS DO?

2

3

OH, YOU ARE SO CUTE, YOU MUST PLAY WITH ME.

4

THERE ARE SO MANY OF THEM, I DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO.

OH NO, FOOLISH JED, YOU HAVE LET OUT THE VERBAL GERBILS!

5

OH HELP ME! OH MAMA! I WISH I HAD NOT PRESSED THAT BUTTON!

6

OW!

GETTOFFME!
GUHGETTOFFME!

AAAA

AAAAAA

AAAAAA..HAARH

STUPID GODDAMN RAT. STUPID -HNF- G-GODDAMN -SNF- S-STUPID -HHU...

OH GOD.

OH GOD.

GO ON, HAL. I'VE GOT *NOTHING* TO DO WHILE I'M WAITING FOR THE *P.I.*'S TO CALL.

PLEASE?

WELL, IF YOU'RE *SURE*...

HERE GOES.

oh you beautiful doll, ya great big beautiful doll...

OKAY, NOW, STEP, STEP--AND TURN--AND STEP, BALL, CHANGE AND--

Let me put my arms around you I could never live without you...

HEY! STOP THAT!

...beautiful doll, if you ever leave me how my heart would ache...

I want to hug you but I fear you'd break...

COME BACK *HERE* WITH THAT PICTURE, YOU *THIEVING*, YOU--YOU--

OHHH...

OH! OH! OH! OH! OH! you beautiful doll!

KNOCK KNOCK

HELLO? HELLO?

COME IN!

MISS WALKER? THERE IS SOMEONE ON THE HALL TELEPHONE FOR YOU...

GAAANGWAY!

WELL? WHAT'S THE NEWS, THEN?

AM I TO INFER, SIR, THAT YOU ARE PRESUMING THAT I MIGHT ACTUALLY HAVE INQUIRED AS TO THE NATURE OF SOMEONE ELSE'S TELEPHONE CALL?

GILBERT...

HOOM.

WELL, I BELIEVE THE CALL COMES FROM THE PRIVATE DETECTIVES MISS WALKER HAD HIRED TO FIND HER BROTHER...

SUCCESSFULLY.

Thank you, Matthew.

hmmm. This is... strange.

The boy is still in the realm of the living, but I cannot find him.

hmm.

I must return to the center of the Dreaming, then. Wait in Eve's cave, Matthew. I shall call you if I have need of you.

There is more to this than meets the eye.

Each human is connected to the Dreaming. They spend a third of their lives in this realm.

To break the connection would take power, and knowledge.

Slowly, methodically, I begin to search for the boy afresh.

I wonder-- fleetingly-- which of them could be responsible:

Fiddler's Green?

Brute and Glob?

The Corinthian...?

THE YELLOWHAMMER MOTEL, BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA.

THE CORINTHIAN.

HELLO. IS THIS "NIMROD"?

I'M JUST A FRIEND. ONE OF YOUR FELLOW COLLECTORS.

I'VE HEARD ON THE GRAPEVINE ABOUT SOME KIND OF GET-TOGETHER...?

FOR PEOPLE WHO SHARE OUR SPECIALIZED INTERESTS.

UH HUH.

SHUMF SCHROMP SCHOMF

I DON'T *NEED* TO WRITE IT DOWN. I *DON'T* FORGET THINGS. SHOOT.

OKAY. THAT'S *THIS* WEEKEND, THEN?

I'LL BE FREE. SO *WHERE* EXACTLY?

GEORGIA, HUH? NICE STATE.

SURE I KNOW THAT TOWN. I KNOW AMERICA LIKE THE BACK OF MY HAND.

I'M PART OF THE *AMERICAN DREAM.*

SHUMF SCHROMP SCHOMF

A NAME TO REGISTER UNDER? PUT ME DOWN AS THE *CORINTHIAN.*

WELL, THAT'S *VERY* KIND OF YOU TO *SAY* SO. *I* ADMIRE *YOUR* WORK AS WELL.

IT 'LL BE GOOD TO MEET SOME KINDRED SPIRITS.

INDEED.

NO - NO, THANK YOU.

G'BYE, BOYS.

WELL, I'LL BE BACK ON MONDAY, HAL. I'VE RENTED A WRECK FOR THE DRIVE DOWN THERE.

I'VE LEFT MY STUFF UP IN THE ROOM.

OH, *NO* PROBLEM, HONEY.

AND I'M *SURE* I CAN FIND SOMEWHERE FOR YOUR BROTHER TO STAY, WHEN YOU TWO GET BACK.

THANKS. YOU'RE TERRIFIC. SEEN GILBERT ANYWHERE? I WANTED TO SAY GOODBYE.

NOT SINCE THIS MORNING. NOW TAKE *CARE* OF YOURSELF. THERE ARE SOME *CRAZY* PEOPLE OUT THERE.

I WILL.

AND KEEP PRACTICING THE *DANCE STEPS* I SHOWED YOU.

I WILL. 'BYE!

GILBERT!

WHAT *ARE* YOU *DOING* HERE?

I INTEND TO ACCOMPANY YOU ON YOUR TRAVELS, MISS WALKER. I BELIEVE AMERICA IS A VERY LARGE AND EXCITABLE PLACE, AND A YOUNG WOMAN TRAVELING ALONE COULD GET INTO ALL SORTS OF SCRAPES.

WITNESS THE OTHER NIGHT.

I AM HERE IN MY ROLE AS AMATEUR KNIGHT ERRANT. I HAVE BROUGHT MY SWORD-STICK, AND AN ANCIENT, BUT SERVICEABLE, REVOLVER.

SHALL WE BE OFF?

OHHHH... NO.

NO. NO. NO. *NO*. ABSOLUTELY *NOT*.

NO WAY!

HE'S *APPARENTLY* OUT ON A FARM, WITH SOME RELATIVES--MY LATE FATHER'S COUSIN *CLARICE* AND HER HUSBAND. LITTLE FARM IN UPSTATE GEORGIA.

THE PRIVATE DETECTIVES FINALLY TRACED HIM THROUGH GEORGIA STATE RECORDS.

...MY LITTLE BROTHER. I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE MY PARENTS SPLIT UP.

ANYWAY, THESE FARMERS ARE CLAIMING $800 A MONTH FOR HIM, FROM THE STATE.

SO AT *LEAST* THEY'LL BE TAKING GOOD *CARE* OF HIM.

EXIT 32A

"WON'T HE BE PLEASED TO SEE US..."

NOW THE SANDMAN'S WHISTLE WILL STOP YOUR EVIL SCHEME, DOCTOR LOBSTER.

CURSES AND DOUBLE CURSES.

4

OHHH...

Found him.

HOW DARE they?

HOW DARE THEY?

Brute and Glob. Brute strength and base cunning. This has their stink about it, Lucien.

HOW DARE THEY?

They severed this child from the True Dreaming.

They are LIVING in his MIND, Lucien.

They know the CAW. MY law. And they have wantonly defied it.

Did they think they could hide from ME?

I do not know what GAME they are playing. But I know this.

I am ANGRY, Lucien.

And it's my move.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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R
SON OF ULTRON